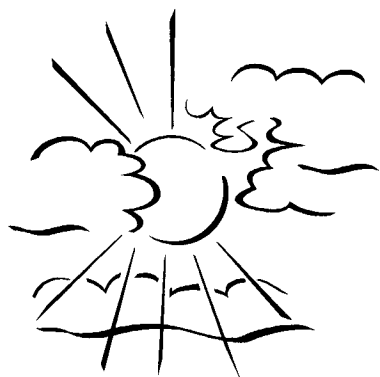


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, November 4, 2005

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Published November 4, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Medicaid, Medicare cuts get Senate OK

By Andrew Taylor
Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Senate on Thursday narrowly approved the first cuts since 1997 to benefit programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and farm subsidies, giving Republicans a modest victory against ever-rising government spending.

The bill, passed by a 52-47 vote, makes mild cuts to the health care programs for the elderly, poor and disabled, but leaves the food stamp program untouched. Sens. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, and Carl Levin, D-Detroit, voted against the bill.

The measure also permits exploratory oil drilling in an Alaskan wilderness area.

The spending battle now heads to the House, where Republicans are divided over whether to cut more deeply across a broader range of social programs. Also, House GOP leaders may remove a provision that allows drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Senate bill is estimated to trim \$36 billion, or 2 percent, from budget deficits forecast at \$1.6 trillion over five years.

Despite strongly supporting the overall effort, the White House has threatened to veto the bill over an obscure proposal to kill subsidies for some regional health insurers that offered Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Comparing cuts

Here are some major program cuts in separate budget plans in the Senate and House. Figures are for five years, through September 2010:

- **Medicare:** The popular federal health care program for the elderly is untouched by the House plan. The Senate measure would save \$5.8 billion, mixing cuts to insurance companies with additional funding for doctor payments, among other provisions.
- **Medicaid:** The House would cut spending on the health benefits program for the poor and disabled by \$9.5 billion by raising co-payments, allowing states to curb coverage, limiting payments for drugs and limiting seniors' ability to shed assets in order to qualify for nursing home care. The Senate plan would trim Medicaid by a net \$4.2 billion, mostly by squeezing payments to drug companies and pharmacies. It includes new spending to

give limited Medicaid coverage to hurricane victims and for a greater number of severely disabled children.

- Food stamps: Senate plan leaves food stamps alone. The House plan kicks 300,000 people off food stamps by tightening eligibility rules for some working families and immigrants, saving \$844 million.

- Farm subsidies: Senate plan cuts programs by \$3 billion, chiefly by cutting direct payments to farmers by 2.5 percent and curbing conservation programs. Income payments to dairy farmers would be extended through 2007. The House cuts farm subsidies by \$2.8 billion. Farmers would face a 1 percent cut in payments and the milk program would not be extended.

Senate OKs cuts to health care

November 4, 2005

BY ANDREW TAYLOR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- The Senate narrowly approved the first cuts since 1997 to benefits such as Medicare, Medicaid and farm subsidies, giving Republicans a symbolic victory Thursday against ever-rising government spending.

The bill, passed by a 52-47 vote, would make modest cuts to the health care programs for elderly, poor and disabled people but leave the food-stamp program untouched.

The measure also would permit exploratory oil drilling in an Alaskan wilderness area.

The spending battle now heads to the House, where Republicans are divided over whether to cut more deeply across a broader range of social programs.

The Senate bill is estimated to trim \$36 billion, or 2%, from budget deficits forecast at \$1.6 trillion over five years. The cuts total \$6 billion for the plan's first year, with deficits predicted to exceed \$300 billion.

The White House strongly supports the overall effort but has threatened to veto the Senate bill over an obscure provision to kill subsidies for some regional health insurers offering Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Democrats oppose the bill because it permits drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and because they say it would increase the deficit.

"Their budget ... actually would make the deficit worse," Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said before the vote. "That's fiscally irresponsible at any time, but especially when we should be saving to prepare for the baby boomers' retirement."

Across the Capitol, the House Budget Committee approved a \$54-billion deficit-reduction bill by a party-line vote. But so many GOP lawmakers are unhappy with the bill that Republican leaders acknowledge it will have to be reworked before a final floor vote next week.

Senate Passes Budget With Benefit Cuts and Oil Drilling

By ROBERT PEAR

The New York Times

Published: November 4, 2005

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 - The Senate on Thursday narrowly approved a sweeping five-year plan to trim a variety of federal benefit programs and to allow drilling for oil and natural gas in a wilderness area of Alaska, increasing the chances that the energy industry and Alaska officials will achieve a long-sought goal.

The budget bill, the most ambitious effort to curb federal spending in eight years, was approved by a vote of 52 to 47. Five Republicans opposed the measure; two Democrats voted for it. Senator Judd Gregg, Republican of New Hampshire, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, said, "This bill is a reflection of the Republican Congress's commitment to pursue a path of fiscal responsibility."

It will, Mr. Gregg said, reduce the deficit and save roughly \$35 billion over the next five years. Democrats said the savings would disappear and the deficit would increase if Republicans carried out their plan to cut taxes by \$70 billion later this year.

The Senate Democratic leader, Harry Reid of Nevada, called the budget "an immoral document" that "harms vulnerable Americans to provide another round of large tax breaks for the elite of this country, special interests and multimillionaires."

Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, told a Congressional committee on Thursday that lawmakers should not extend President Bush's tax cuts if they could not make up for the lost revenue.

The Senate held 22 roll-call votes on Thursday as it methodically disposed of a stack of amendments to the budget bill.

In the House, Republicans have drafted a bill that would save \$53.9 billion over five years, about 50 percent more than the Senate measure.

House Republican leaders said they hoped the House would approve their version of the budget next week, but they appeared to remain short of the votes for passage.

The House bill would also allow drilling in part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. But the House has become a battleground, and the fate of the overall budget bill is in doubt because two dozen House Republicans have objected to the drilling.

President Bush praised the Senate for passing a deficit-reduction bill and for voting to allow drilling in a small part of the Arctic refuge.

Opponents of Arctic drilling said they believed they had enough moderate Republicans on their side to defeat the House bill in its current form. Party leaders said they were considering changes in the plan. They said they hoped to win support from some New England Republicans by emphasizing that the bill provided an extra \$1 billion for home-heating assistance.

The Senate showdown on Arctic drilling came over a proposal by Senator Maria Cantwell, Democrat of Washington, to preserve the longstanding ban on oil and gas drilling in the Alaska refuge. By a vote of 51 to 48, the Senate rejected her proposal.

Moments later the Senate voted overwhelmingly, 83 to 16, to prohibit the export of any oil or gas extracted from the refuge.

The export ban was proposed by Senators Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, and Jim Talent, Republican of Missouri. Without the ban, Mr. Wyden said, "there is no assurance that even one drop of Alaskan oil will get to hurting Americans."

Senator Talent said that he was "a very strong supporter of exploring for oil in the Arctic," but that the main reason for such drilling was "to enhance our national security and our own domestic oil supply."

Drilling in the wildlife refuge is a priority for President Bush, who says it would increase the supply of oil and gas. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Republican of Alaska, said Thursday's action took the nation "one more giant step toward the possibility of oil exploration and development on a tiny sliver of Alaska's coastal plain."

Senate opponents of Arctic drilling have used filibusters, or the threat of such open-ended debate, to block drilling proposals in the past. But drilling could not be thwarted by a filibuster this year because it was considered under special Senate rules that apply to the budget process. The budget assumes that the government will receive at least \$2.4 billion over five years from the sale of drilling rights.

Senator Pete V. Domenici, Republican of New Mexico, chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, said that Alaska drilling would produce oil and jobs.

"It's high time that we do something about our oil dependency," Senator Domenici said. "It's time that we do something for the American people about the rising price of gasoline at the pump. This is a rare opportunity to produce substantial quantities of crude oil from our own homeland. It will also produce up to 736,000 jobs."

The Republican senators who voted against the budget bill were Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island, Norm Coleman of Minnesota, Susan Collins of Maine, Mike DeWine of Ohio, and Olympia J. Snowe of Maine. The Democrats voting for the bill were Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana and Ben Nelson of Nebraska.

Carl Hulse contributed reporting for this article.

Senior facility strains county

Macomb leaders have considered privatizing senior medical care center hurt by cuts in Medicaid.

By Jim Lynch / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- There is little that Helen Kwietniewski would change about the place that has been her home for the last 18 years. To the 63-year-old, the Macomb County-run Martha T. Berry Medical Care Facility offers everything she needs.

On the first floor, just through the front entrance of the new wing, the woman everyone refers to as "Kiwi" can find an in-house bank, a beauty salon and a small cafe.

"This place is wonderful now," said Kwietniewski, decked out in her usual Detroit Red Wings sweatshirt.

But these days, Martha T. Berry has been hit hard by cuts in Medicaid, the state-federal health care program that provides insurance for 1.4 million low-income Michigan residents.

Compounding the problem are rising costs in employee health care and pensions at the 170-bed facility. The county expects it will have to increase its support to the facility by 65 percent. That's an increase of \$3.3 million to a total of almost \$8.5 million.

Martha T. Berry provides long- and short-term care to elderly Macomb County residents and those with severe mental and physical disabilities. Roughly 85 percent of the center's residents are Medicaid recipients.

Last spring, commissioners discussed privatizing the facility or, at least, taking more patients who have insurance. But with the fiscal year coming to a close, facility officials say the increased subsidies are only a temporary problem.

"By 2007 or so, we hope to get back to the same level we were at before construction started," said Josephine Savalle-Dunn, the facility's administrator.

The problems at Martha T. Berry are just one item on a list of financial troubles facing Macomb County. The county is in the midst of a stretch of budget troubles it hasn't seen in more than a decade.

In 2004, Macomb County finished the year with an operating deficit of \$3 million. By the end of this year, county officials expect to finish somewhere between \$8 million and \$10 million in the red. Next year, that number could reach as high as \$14 million by some estimates.

Operations at Martha T. Berry are hampered by construction. Crews are finishing the third expansion of the facility since its creation in 1949, and should wrap up by April. In the meantime, capacity has been reduced by nearly 40 beds, meaning less revenue is coming in. Six months ago, Martha T. Berry was one of several county operations being eyed as options in dealing with Macomb County's fiscal problems. Commissioners discussed the possibility of

Martha T. Berry

- Location: 43533 Elizabeth Road in Mt. Clemens
- Founded: 1949, with donations from the late Henry G. Berry, M.D., who practiced medicine in Macomb County for about 50 years. The facility is named in memory of Dr. Berry's wife, Martha Taylor Berry.
- Capacity: 217 skilled-care beds (when current construction is completed).

privatizing the health care facility and turning over operation of the county library to Macomb Community College.

Last week, Commissioner Don Brown suggested dismantling the county's parks and recreation department and selling Freedom Hill Park to the current operators, Hillside Productions.

But Martha T. Berry's situation may be helped by legislation that recently passed through the Michigan legislature dealing with a provider tax. That legislation, if approved at the federal level, could increase the level of Medicaid reimbursement facilities receive.

In Macomb County, that could mean a revenue increase of as much as \$1.5 million.

Commissioner Paul Gielegghem, D-Clinton Township, serves as the liaison between the facility and elected officials, and said he expects relief to come soon.

"This is definitely a temporary thing," he said. Gielegghem said the completion of construction and partial restoration of Medicaid reimbursement rates should help lessen the financial blow to the county -- possibly as soon as next year.

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Grant will fund medical, dental needs

Emergency services help low-income county residents

Friday, November 4, 2005

BY LISA CAROLIN

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Emergency medical and dental help are being welcomed by needy residents in Livingston County. The Livingston County United Way awarded the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency an emergency one-year funding grant for \$10,000 for medical and dental emergencies in July.

"We've had an amazing response," says Beverly Mostowy, deputy director for Livingston County Services at OLHSA. "We've helped 19 families so far at a cost of \$4,600. "The people are so grateful because they've contacted everyone else and don't know what they're going to do."

Darby St. Jacques received \$250 from the fund to help pay for dental work.

"I was in a lot of pain, and the money helped pay for most of the cost," says St. Jacques, a Brighton Township resident. "My health turned a few years ago, and OLHSA came to my rescue helping me pay for food and gas for my car and heating fuel."

St. Jacques also has benefited from a training program at OLHSA and now works part-time as a senior aide.

"There is a real need in this county for low-income people and for people who work and don't have health or dental insurance," says Catherine Rea Dunning, OLHSA's director for Livingston County service. "We've had quite a few referrals. Clients need to come in and apply to qualify, and it's best if they have an estimate from a doctor or dentist's office in hand."

Clients can also apply for assistance to help pay for prescriptions. OLHSA started a dental fund in 2004 in response to needs from Head Start and Medicaid clients, and Dunning says that the dental donations did well.

She plans to reapply for the emergency medical and dental grant again next year.

The United Way's annual fundraising campaign continues this fall.

Lisa Carolin can be reached at lcarolin@livingstoncommunitynews.com or at (810) 844-2010.

Published November 4, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

DHS proposals target welfare reform Self-sufficiency at core of suggestions for state program

By Tim Martin
Associated Press

A state agency is suggesting welfare reforms it says would improve the chances for Michigan's poorest families to become self-sufficient.

The Department of Human Services also said in a report to a legislative work group Thursday that the changes could help reduce the state's welfare caseload, which in September had 211,402 recipients on cash assistance, down slightly from the 2004 monthly average of 211,569.

The state spends nearly \$395 million annually on cash assistance to low-income families.

The proposed changes target a Michigan program called "Work First" that seeks to find jobs for welfare recipients. About half of the people who now go through the program return to the welfare rolls within a year.

"Although we have been able to help many families connect with the work force, those connections are too often temporary with wages insufficient to move the families from poverty," a DHS report said.

"Many are working at jobs with wages and hours that are not sufficient to close their cash assistance cases. Whether working or not, they often have low- skill levels and poor work histories."

House Republicans and the Senate also are offering welfare reform plans, said Rep. Jerry Kooiman, R-Grand Rapids, who is among the leaders of the welfare work group. The panel is reviewing who gets assistance and what changes could be made in the system.

The DHS report suggests changes that include developing a specific self-sufficiency plan for each family in the program that would replace Work First. The plan would outline services to be provided - such as remedial education and skills training - and the family's responsibilities for receiving them.

Man who killed baby gets prison

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, November 04, 2005

By Paul Janczewski

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Tears were shed in court, but Genesee Circuit Judge Archie L. Hayman thought the emotion was wasted on the wrong person.

Family members cried for Andrew L. LaMew when he was sentenced for killing his infant daughter, Sophie Stella Blue LaMew, in a fit of frustration.

Hayman urged those in court to "stop being so concerned" about the father and show more for the child.

"This is a case that breaks my heart," Hayman said before sentencing LaMew to 13 years, 6 months to 33 years, 4 months in prison for his guilty plea to second-degree murder.

Hayman said the 4-week-old infant "deserved to be nourished and loved" instead of squeezed and struck.

"And you are responsible for that," he told LaMew.

The baby was born March 14 to LaMew and Ashley Paige Skerjance.

The family, including Skerjance, rallied around LaMew.

Skerjance said the child was "the light of my life" and praised LaMew's love for the baby.

"I'm not angry (at LaMew)," she said outside the court. "If he hurt her, it wasn't on purpose."

Although she agreed LaMew deserves some time in jail, "cutting his life in half isn't the answer." LaMew, 26, originally was charged with felony murder and first-degree child abuse in the April 13 slaying, but accepted a plea deal from prosecutors.

The 29-day-old girl suffered six broken ribs and a large bruise near the back of her head caused by an impact with a solid object, a pathologist said. She also had a large bite mark on her cheek.

Paramedics and officers were called about 5 a.m. to 5351 Ridgebend Drive in the Mapleridge Apartments complex in Mundy Township and found Sophie not breathing.

She was pronounced dead about an hour later at Genesys Regional Medical Center in Grand Blanc Township.

Former cop pleads guilty to abuse

Trace Christenson

The Battle Creek Enquirer

A former Albion police officer has entered pleas on charges he photographed a nude teenage girl.

Kyle Chaney, 39, pleaded guilty Thursday to second-degree child abuse and using a computer to produce child sexually explicit material.

Chaney was charged in August after investigators from the Calhoun County Sheriff's Department alleged Albion's Department of Public Safety 2005 Officer of the Year had taken nude pictures of a 16-year-old girl and stored them on his computer.

On Thursday, Chaney, standing with his attorney, Mark Webb, told Calhoun County Circuit Court Judge Stephen Miller that he did make the photographs and used his computer to store them on a compact disc.

With his plea, Chaney faces up to seven years in prison for using the computer to create child sexually explicit material and up to four years for the second-degree child abuse charge.

Chaney originally was arraigned on four charges of producing sexually abusive material, possession of child sexually abusive material, accosting a child for

immoral purposes and second-degree child abuse, and could have faced up to 20 years in prison.

Prosecutors alleged the incidents occurred between June 2004 and August.

As part of a plea agreement, the more serious charges will be dismissed and special prosecutor Chris Johnson, an assistant in Kalamazoo County assigned to the case, will recommend probation and possibly time in the county jail, but no prison sentence.

Chaney is scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 19. A 14-year veteran of the department, Chaney was fired in September. He remains free on \$50,000 bond.

Trace Christenson covers crime and courts. He can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com

Team response to sexual assaults proposed

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, November 04, 2005

By James L. Smith

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LAPEER - April was only 8 when she underwent a physical exam and questioning about two years of sexual abuse.

The trauma of that exam - she had to tell and retell her rape story to a succession of nurses and a doctor in a hospital room separated from others only by a curtain - as well as a lack of counseling afterward, haunted April later in life.

She said it led her into an abusive relationship that lasted a "very, very long time."

Now, the Lapeer County Board of Commissioners wants to prevent experiences like those of April, who was identified only by her first name. She told her story Thursday as commissioners considered a proposed county program known as Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and Sexual Assault Response Team.

Commissioners agreed to let the county's health department provide a clinical examination room, clearing the way for officials to apply for state, federal and private grants to pay for it.

In Michigan, 29 counties have the program and five more are developing it. It began in 1970 and nationwide has grown to 450 similar programs, Lapeer County Prosecutor Byron J. Kenschuh said.

A pool of trained registered nurses will conduct forensic medical exams and interviews in a compassionate, comprehensive and sensitive way, said Tracy Howard, a sexual assault survivor advocate.

Currently, sexual assault victims sometimes have to be treated out of the county, said Cathy Strong, the victims advocate for the prosecutor's office.

"We hope having local services will encourage reporting of sexual assault," Strong said.

Kenschuh said counties that have established the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and Sexual Assault Response Teams have shown an increase in the reporting of criminal sexual assaults. The rapid and competent collection of evidence also improves the chances of successful prosecutions.

One stumbling block was the inclusion of the "morning after" pill as a remedy for possible pregnancies resulting from rape cases. But debate about that point did not materialize when commissioners were assured that the county would not have to pay for the drug and would not provide it.

Earlier this year, commissioners rejected distribution of the pill through the county health department. Health director Stephanie Mercer said that under the orders passed by the commissioners, her office could not provide the pills.

September jobless rate matches year ago

The resumption of the school year led to greater hiring

November 4, 2005

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Teachers and other employees returning to schools helped cut Monroe County's unemployment rate to 5.6 percent in September, down from 6 percent in August.

About 4,300 people were without work during the month, down from 4,700 in August, state officials said. The county's total work force was unchanged from August to September at 78,200.

The decline in unemployment was reflected across the state with 14 of Michigan's 17 major labor market areas recorded lower rates, according to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

"The unemployment rate went down or held steady in most areas of Michigan in September," said Rick Waclawek, director of the state's Bureau of Labor Market Information & Strategic Initiatives. "In most regions, increases in both state and local government education employment were offset by labor force withdrawal among youth and a decline in summer and tourism-related employment."

Monroe County's unemployment rate in September matched that of a year ago.

A survey of employers showed that payroll jobs in Michigan rose in September by 68,000 to total 4,391,000. Jobs grew primarily in local government education, up 69,000, and state government education, up 16,000, with the return of students to colleges, universities, and local schools.

Seasonal-related reductions were recorded in leisure and hospitality services, down 14,000 jobs, while trade, transportation and utilities lost 8,000 and construction lost 4,000.

Somewhat offsetting the decreases were increases in manufacturing and education and health services, each adding 8,000 jobs.

The boost in manufacturing employment was due primarily to recalls from short-term layoffs in auto-related manufacturing.

For the most part, these recalls to work were recorded in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia area, and to a lesser degree in the Flint area.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 3, 2005

Governor Granholm Calls for Extradition of Florida Man for Unpaid Child Support

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced that she has initiated proceedings to extradite a Florida man charged with failing to pay more than \$26,000 in child support, a felony crime punishable by four years in prison.

Donald Ray Beall was arrested by law enforcement officers in Lee County, Florida in August 2005. In July 1997, Beall was ordered by the Ottawa County Circuit Court to pay \$548.10 per month for the support of his minor children, but he has failed to comply. As of October 2005, his unpaid support obligations totaled \$26,618.18.

“Mr. Beall has failed to meet his responsibility to support his children, and that has consequences,” Granholm said. “These extradition proceedings are the result of the diligent work of the Ottawa County Friend of the Court and the office of Ottawa County Prosecutor Ronald J. Franz. Michigan has a great team committed to making sure those who are required to pay child support, and those who can pay, do so.”

Upon return to Michigan, Mr. Beall will face prosecution. In Michigan, non-support of a child is a felony punishable by up to four years in prison and/or a \$2,000 fine. Since taking office, Governor Granholm has requested the return, through the extradition process, of more than 100 parents who have failed to support their children as ordered by courts in Michigan.

Under the Uniform Criminal Extradition Act, the power to demand extradition of a fugitive who has fled from justice in Michigan and taken refuge in another state is vested in the governor. After receiving extradition documents, Florida officials can issue a warrant delivering the fugitive into the custody of Michigan authorities.

To encourage parents to pay their past due child support, the state is offering an amnesty period that began October 1, 2005. Under the new law, parents who owe past due child support in Michigan have a 90-day window to avoid state criminal and civil enforcement penalties. Penalties that have already been initiated will be waived with the exception of felony prosecutions or in circumstances where a delinquent parent has already been arrested due to failure or refusal to pay past due child support.

The amnesty program does not affect current support obligations. The amnesty program was established by Public Act 584 of 2004 and sponsored by Rep. Alexander Lipsey. For more information regarding the amnesty program, parents can contact their local Friend of the Court office, call 1-866-540-0008, or visit www.michigan.gov/dhs and click on “Child Support.”

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Youth prison closing prompts suit from owners, local officials

11/3/2005, 2:20 p.m. ET

By TIM MARTIN The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The operators of a private youth prison near Baldwin sued the state Thursday, claiming wrongful termination of the company's lease.

Inmates at the 480-bed facility about 65 miles north of Grand Rapids already have been transferred to other facilities and nearly 200 employees have been offered other state jobs.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed money that would have kept the prison open in the budget year that started Oct. 1. The veto saved the state \$18 million by ending the state's contract with the GEO Group Inc., the private owners of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility.

GEO, along with the Village of Baldwin and Webber Township, filed suit in an Ingham County court against the Michigan Department of Corrections and the Michigan Department of Management and Budget.

The company, based in Boca Raton, Fla., said the state can't end the lease because there was no specific prohibition against using appropriated funds to pay the lease in a Department of Corrections budget recently approved by state lawmakers.

But Granholm said the facility costs too much to run and houses few of the violent young offenders it was meant to hold. In the past, the state has said the Granholm veto was enough to end the lease agreement.

The state sent economic development workers to Baldwin to help local officials look for other business opportunities for the city and county, one of the state's poorest. But that didn't appease those who opposed ending the contract.

Local government officials say state officials under former GOP Gov. John Engler made promises to persuade them to allow the prison in their community, including a long-term commitment by the state to use the prison after it opened in 1999.

Republican lawmakers who represent the area said Granholm's decision to end the lease agreement will cost jobs and hurt the economy in Lake County.

Corrections Department spokesman Russ Marlan declined to comment on the suit because it is pending litigation.

The prison's operating agreement ended Sept. 30 at the end of the fiscal year, although an extension allowed offenders to remain at the site until mid-October. The lease termination is effective Dec. 2, GEO said.

"I am disappointed that we have been forced to file this action to enforce our rights under the lease agreement," GEO Chief Executive Officer George Zoley said in a statement. "We will continue to work diligently with all concerned parties to find a way to reactivate the prison on a fair and equitable basis."

On the Net:

Michigan Department of Corrections: <http://www.michigan.gov/corrections>

Youth prison closing prompts suit from owners, village and township

Cadillac News

November 4, 2005

From staff and wire reports

The operators of the private youth prison near Baldwin sued the state Thursday, claiming wrongful termination of the company's lease.

The village of Baldwin and Webber Township joined The GEO Group, Inc. in filing the suit in Ingham County court against the Michigan Department of Corrections and Michigan Department of Management and Budget.

Inmates at the 480-bed facility have been transferred to other facilities and the facility's nearly 200 employees have been offered other state jobs.

Job loss is only one problem locals face as a result of the prison closing. A water system built in Webber Township for MYCF supplies only one other user, a small office building.

The system has become a costly white elephant.

"It's bad enough that we're losing revenues," said Township Supervisor Tony Gagliardo. "But it's costing us to keep it open."

A mechanical failure of a water pump on Nov. 1 is adding to township expenses, but officials aim to keep the system operational to support measures to reopen operations.

"Without it, we're taking a 30-year step backward," Gagliardo said.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed money that would have kept the prison open in the budget year that started Oct. 1. The veto saved the state \$18 million by ending the state's contract with GEO.

Known as the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility, GEO designed, constructed and operated the prison under two agreements entered into with the state of Michigan. Contracts included a 20-year lease and a four-year operating agreement renewed in 2003.

The company, based in Boca Raton, Fla., said the state can't end the lease because there was no specific prohibition against using appropriated funds to pay the lease in a Department of Corrections budget recently approved by state lawmakers.

The state sent economic development workers to Baldwin to help local officials look for other

business opportunities for the city and county, one of the state's poorest. But it didn't appease those opposed to ending the contract.

Local government officials say state officials under former GOP Gov. John Engler made promises to persuade them to allow the prison in their community, including a long-term commitment by the state to use the prison after it opened in 1999.

Republican lawmakers who represent the area said Granholm's decision to end the lease agreement would cost jobs and hurt the economy in Lake County. The lease termination is effective Dec. 2, according to GEO.

GEO is examining alternative uses for the facility.

“We think it's best used in the state system,” said company spokesperson Bill Nowling. “We want to keep the facility active and open.”

news@cadillacnews.com | 775-NEWS (6397)

GEO, COMMUNITY CHALLENGES PRISON CLOSURE

The owner of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility is challenging the state's authority to back out of its lease and the communities around the prison are seeking to prevent job and financial losses expected to follow closure of the facility.

The GEO Group Incorporated of Florida, which owns the state's only private prison, argued in a case filed Thursday that the governor's veto of funds to cover the lease payments on the facility was not sufficient to cancel the 20-year lease. The company argued that the lease required a positive statement in the appropriations act that funds could not be spent on the facility, not simply the lack of a line item to fund the payments.

The village of Baldwin and Webber Township argued in the lawsuit, as they had in legislative committee hearings, that they spent economic development and infrastructure funds to prepare for the facility on the promise from state officials that it would be a long-term operation. They argued that the prison should be kept open until the lawsuit can be resolved to prevent losses.

"I am disappointed that we have been forced to file this action to enforce our rights under the lease agreement," said George Zoley, CEO of GEO Group. "We will continue to work diligently with all concerned parties to find a way to reactivate the prison on a fair and equitable basis."

Linda Norlock with the Department of Management and Budget said the department had met the requirements of the lease. "We feel we are complying with the cancellation clause in the agreement," she said.

The key issue has been difficulty in finding other tenants for the facility. GEO argued in its complaint that the location and the state design requirements have limited its ability to recover the remainder of its investment in the facility.

"The expensive, specialized design and remote location of the Youth Correctional Facility make it unsuitable for any use other than as a correctional facility to be operated by or on behalf of the State," the complaint said. "Defendants have unlawfully abandoned Plaintiff GEO Group with a prison which was designed to house Youth Correctional prisoners of the State of Michigan, with no prospect of finding another use for the facility or replacing the Lease payments for which the Defendants are obligated, in order to cover their construction costs and permanent financing."

Wayne Calabrese, president of GEO, said the company has been working to re-lease the space. “We’ve been talking to various local, state and federal agencies. We put together a marketing brochure,” he said. “So far we’ve not been successful in finding someone to use the facility.”

And he said the state is partly to blame for that difficulty in finding a new user. “Because of the size of the investment we made, given the number of beds it has and given the high cost of retiring that investment, it’s made it difficult to bring it in at a cost that is attractive to these other entities,” he said. And he said much of the cost of the facility came in meeting Department of Corrections’ specifications.

But he said location is also a hindrance. “It’s not an easy facility to get to,” he said.

No hearings had been set in the case as of Thursday evening. The case (*The GEO Group Incorporated v. Department of Corrections*, Ingham Circuit Court docket No. 05-194-MK) has been assigned to Judge James Giddings.

Troubled kids get second chance

Friday, November 04, 2005

By Pat Rombyer

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More than 300 youths who ran afoul of the law last year were given a second chance through the Juvenile Diversion/Restoration program offered by Florence Crittenton Services.

The program began in 1981 and was funded for years by a combination of local and state funds. In 1997, however, Starr Commonwealth in Albion opened a satellite office in Jackson and took over the agency. Starr dropped it a few years later when it closed the Jackson office.

Bob Powell, executive director of Florence Crittenton, came to the program's rescue, found a way to fund it and kept it operating.

Florence Crittenton was historically an agency that helped wayward girls. "In 2000, the board voted to change the mission to also help young men," Powell said.

The United Way of Jackson County provides about \$73,000 toward its \$100,000 operating budget.

The program identifies young people who are making their debut with the county court system. Those first-time offenders accused of nonviolent crimes, such as shoplifting, theft or vandalism, are eligible to participate in the three-month program.

To date, its success rate has been pretty good, said program manager Stacy Wables.

"Six months after completing the program, 85 percent of the kids are consistently attending school," she said.

Kids involved in the program must be younger than 18.

"Occasionally, we get a 9- or 10-year-old," Wables said. "Most are between 12 and 18."

The philosophical mission is for the kids to give back to the community, Wables said.

So they meet weekly with a diversion advocate and are given tasks to complete, such as writing a theme paper about their crime, performing community service at an area nonprofit organization, apologizing to the victim or even attending an anger-management class or a shoplifting intervention program.

"They're always surprised at how shoplifting affects the community," said advocate Angie Barkholz, who listens to kids tell of how they snuck clothing and jewelry out of stores. "They don't think of it as a crime.

"A family of four pays an additional \$400 a year in costs because of shoplifters."

Once the three-month period is successfully completed, the young clients are tracked for another year. About 72 percent do not re-offend, Wables said.

"The kids who are willing to participate and listen are usually successful," Barkholz said.

For those who continue skipping school, failing drug screens or not showing up for counseling, it's back to juvenile court.

"Most parents are really thankful for the program," Wables said. "They're glad for the second chance."

Girl With Cancer Reunites With Family as State Gives Up Custody

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

The New York Times

Published: November 4, 2005

HOUSTON, Nov. 3 - Promising to seek the best cancer treatment possible for their 13-year-old daughter, Katie, her parents, Edward and Michele Wernecke, reclaimed her from a hospital here on Thursday, reuniting a family separated by a judge's order five months ago.

"We're grateful Katie's going to be home with us," Mr. Wernecke, a rancher from Corpus Christi, said outside the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center.

He deplored their depiction by the Texas authorities as negligent parents simply because they objected to the radiation treatment that doctors said their daughter needed for Hodgkin's disease. "We will do our best to get the finest treatment in the world to get her cured and back to normal again," Mr. Wernecke said.

In addition to continuing chemotherapy for Katie, he said, they are taking her to a nutritional clinic in Kansas next week for evaluation and possible vitamin C treatments.

Katie had little to say. Life away from her family, she said, has been boring. Asked how her pets were doing, she said, "I haven't been home lately, so I don't know."

On Monday, a second judge overturned the ruling in June that placed Katie with a foster family and enforced a course of chemotherapy. Child protection authorities had accused her parents of thwarting her treatment by hiding her on a relative's property. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services won a court order to place Katie with a foster family and also removed the couple's three sons for a time.

With the girl's prognosis worsening and the Werneckes arguing that their parental rights to decide what was best for her had been grossly violated, the state's supervisory role was ended and Katie was returned to her parents on the completion of her latest round of chemotherapy at M. D. Anderson.

Coming on the heels of the Terri Schiavo right-to-die furor, this case raised questions of parental rights and responsibilities in their children's medical care. Peter Johnston, president of the Texas

Center for Family Rights in Rosenberg, said the Bureau of Child Protective Services had "intervened way too often in way too many families."

But Darrell Azar, communications manager for the Department of Family and Protective Services, which includes the child protective bureau, said there were "clearly documented reasons" that the state had been given custody of Katie.

But now that the state had been removed, Mr. Azar said, "we're hopeful the family will continue to do what is best for Katie."

Mr. Wernecke said Katie's recovery chances during her treatment "went from 80 percent to 90 percent down to 20."

He declined to discuss her prognosis further, saying: "We're not talking about that today. Today is a happy day."

Among the options the family is exploring, he said, are intravenous vitamin C treatments at the Center for the Improvement of Human Functioning in Wichita, Kan., where they have an appointment on Monday.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake, chief medical officer of the center, said in a telephone interview that the outpatient center, established 30 years ago, did not offer alternative medical treatments but rather integrated nutritional therapies into traditional medicine. He cited a recent study in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that found that vitamin C administered intravenously rather than orally can kill some cancer cells.

Mrs. Wernecke said that Katie first began feeling ill in the summer of 2004 and that last winter she had trouble breathing and developed a fast-growing lump on her neck that led to the diagnosis of Hodgkin's disease, which originates in lymphatic tissue. She was given chemotherapy, but when doctors urgently prescribed radiation, the Werneckes balked. Mr. Wernecke said then he was concerned about the harmful effects on her growth and development and sought other opinions.

At Driscoll Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi, Dr. Nejemie Alter, a specialist in pediatric oncology-hematology, said that there were no other options for Katie and that the situation was life threatening.

When Mrs. Wernecke hid Katie on a relative's property, Dr. Alter complained to the family services agency, which obtained an order from Judge Carl Lewis removing her from her home. He placed her with a foster family in Houston, where her chemotherapy treatments could be enforced and monitored. She was also assigned a guardian and a lawyer.

Dr. Alter's office said he was no longer involved with the case and had no comment.

After Katie's removal, social workers, saying the family's ranch house was unfit, also obtained an order removing the three sons, 14, 5 and 2, to a children's home. They were returned under Judge Lewis's order less than two weeks later.

Judge Lewis was replaced on the case by Judge Jack Hunter, who was more receptive to complaints by the Werneckes' lawyer, James A. Pikel, that their rights had been violated and that there was no practical way of enforcing any course of treatment that Katie, as well as her parents, vehemently opposed.

Judge Hunter, in his ruling that returned Katie to the family, declined to vacate Judge Lewis's rulings faulting the Werneckes for medical neglect. Mr. Wernecke said the family would apply to the State Supreme Court for that relief.

He was in the lobby of the cancer center when his cellphone trilled with a call from a son at home. "Yeah," he said, "we're going to bring Katie."

Trial is set for Hendrix's son in assault case

November 3, 2005

BY MARYANNE GEORGE
FREE PRESS ANN ARBOR BUREAU

Stephen Hendrix, the son of Detroit mayoral candidate Freman Hendrix, will stand trial Jan. 19 on misdemeanor domestic violence charges.

Fifteenth District Judge Ann Mattson set Hendrix's trial date at a pretrial conference Wednesday morning in her Ann Arbor courtroom. Hendrix's attorney, John Shea, requested a jury trial. Hendrix, 21, is accused of assaulting Monique Eubanks, an 18-year-old student at Eastern Michigan University, on Oct. 10. Hendrix, a student at the University of Michigan, has denied the charges.

He was accompanied to court Wednesday by his father, Detroit mayoral candidate Freman Hendrix, mother, sister and two members of Freman Hendrix's campaign staff. They sat in the back of the courtroom during the brief hearing and left the courthouse without comment. Freman Hendrix is running against incumbent Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick in Tuesday's election. The tape of the 911 call to Ann Arbor police obtained by the Free Press depicted a frightened woman who was locked in the bathroom of Stephen Hendrix's apartment. On the recording, Eubanks told a dispatcher that Hendrix did not hit her.

A copy of the police report obtained by the Free Press on Tuesday also provided more information about the incident than a heavily edited copy of the report released last month. The new copy of the report quotes Eubanks as saying "Hendrix was trying to force her to..." but deletes the rest of the sentence.

Shea said Hendrix denies assaulting Eubanks.

"He did not commit an act of domestic violence," Shea said after the hearing. "This has been a dignified process so far, and I want discussions limited to the courtroom."

Stephen Hendrix also faces a Nov. 17 court date on an April 2 drunken driving charge in Ypsilanti Township. He has pleaded not guilty in that case.

If he's convicted on the domestic violence charge, Hendrix faces a maximum penalty of 93 days in jail and or a \$500 fine, according to court records. The drunken driving charge, as a first offense, carries the same maximum penalties plus a possible 360 hours of community service.

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Habitat for Humanity to dedicate two homes

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, November 04, 2005

By George Jaksa

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FLINT - Genesee County Habitat for Humanity will dedicate two more homes for the needy at 2 p.m. Sunday.

The dedications will complete construction of five homes this year, all in the Foss Avenue area of northeast Flint.

A home at 1183 E. York Ave. was built for the Raven Simmons family while another at 1210 E. York was built for the Debra Humphery family.

Both homeowners will be given a Bible and a symbolic key to the house.

Faith community urged to transcend politics

Friday, November 04, 2005

By Rick Wilson
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- How can you be a Republican and still believe in God?

The sentiment behind that question was among the matters discussed at a downtown forum Thursday attended by city leaders and representatives of local social service agencies.

It was sponsored by the Center for American Progress, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, as part of its national Faith and Progressive Policy initiative.

The center is a nonpartisan research and educational institute seeking to provide forums to generate new and progressive public policy proposals. Grand Rapids was the final stop on a tour, which has been to Denver, Kansas City and San Francisco since spring.

Mayor George Heartwell, an ordained minister, said he found among the more interesting discussions was what some see as a growing divide within the faith community over political ideology at a time when faith-based organizations are being asked to shoulder more of the burden for serving the nation's poor.

Eric Sapp, who works for a firm aiding Democratic policy makers, said he's disturbed by what he sees as a growing "red and blue divide" within the faith community.

"There are people on both sides of political ideology questioning people's faith because of their political ideology," Sapp said.

"There are people out there who are beginning to ask how can you be a Republican or how can you be a Democrat and still believe in God?"

Lisa Mitchell, director of the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism, said she hasn't seen the sentiment in her corner of the world but added there's no place for it at a time when so many are newly unemployed. Mitchell suggested even secular politicians need to find the humanity to set ideology aside to work toward solutions.

"If we are going to solve these problems, we can't afford to see ourselves as red or blue," Mitchell said. "These issues are so important that we need to work together and say to people, 'If this issue is important to you, come around the table and let's work together.'"

Heartwell believes the divide likely is confined to the extremes of political ideology. Noting a number of Grand Valley State University students in the audience of about 100 Thursday, he added that, while few solutions were proposed, the discussion was stimulating and worthwhile.

"If it starts the debate, that's good," Heartwell said. "The fact that there were a number of students here tonight tells me the discussion will continue back in their classrooms where there may well be some solutions proposed that haven't even been thought about yet."

Greenspan warns about big spending

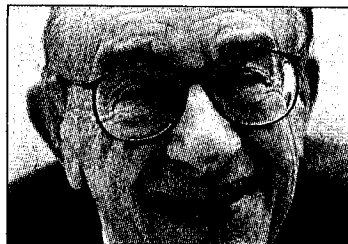
By MARILYN GEEWAX
COX NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan used one of his final appearances before Congress to warn lawmakers Thursday that their profligate spending threatens an otherwise healthy economy.

The government has to borrow so much money to fill its annual budget gap — \$319 billion in fiscal 2005 alone — that many economists fear it might begin crowding out private borrowers.

"Unless the situation is reversed, at some point these budget trends will cause serious economic disruptions," Greenspan told Congress' Joint Economic Committee. "Specifically, large deficits will result in rising interest rates."

The Fed chairman made his warnings as the Senate moved toward a final vote on a bill that



LAUREN VICTORIA BURKE/Associated Press

Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan testifies Thursday on Capitol Hill.

would cut \$36 billion in spending in the next five years. At the same time, the House was engaged in a tough battle over a bill that would make \$54 billion in cuts, including in social programs such as food stamps, child support enforcement and Medicaid.

Greenspan said the federal budget "is unlikely to improve substantially further" unless Congress restores budget rules requiring tax cuts to be offset by spending cuts.

Greenspan, who will retire

Jan. 31 after 18 years heading the Fed, was optimistic about the country's short-term prospects. "The U.S. economy appears to retain important forward momentum," he said, despite the effects of this summer's destructive hurricanes on energy and commodity prices.

The economy grew at a 3.8% annual rate in the third quarter, the 10th consecutive quarter of growth exceeding 3%.

Greenspan predicted the economy would continue to see productivity gains.

That view got support Thursday when the Labor Department said worker productivity rose at a better-than-expected 4.1% annual rate in the third quarter.

Still, Greenspan said he sees "more uncertainty" about inflation, which often heats up when a strong economy creates shortages of goods and labor, driving up prices and wages.